The official newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS

UFO
UNITED FANZINE ORGANIZATION
Oct. 2013
#230

The UFO Membership

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TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS #230
FIRST PRINTING: October 2013. This edition is the PDF version of T-FRAGS, printed by Rob Imes (contact info above). **PRICE**: $1.50 (plus $1.00 for P&H in the USA). All material in this issue is © 2013 their respective creators.

CHAIRMAN CHATTER

Thanks to **David Branstetter** for drawing the front cover of this issue! (Its photorealistic style reminds me of Dave Sim's *glamourpuss.)* Nice job!

Thanks also to **Darren Goodhart** for the back cover art featuring GORGO. (The upcoming issue of my fanzine *Ditkomania* will have a Gorgo theme, and this illustration will be in the issue, so consider this just a preview!)

My thanks to everyone who voted me in for another year as **UFO Chairman**. By the way, 2014 is the 40th anniversary of when the BPP was renamed the UFO.

Dan Burke's application to rejoin the UFO was narrowly defeated by a vote of 4 to 3.

Alan Sissom, President of the Collectors' Club, plans to submit his forthcoming zine THE IMAGINATION LINK as his application zine to join the UFO. Look for it in your mailboxes later this month.

To anyone reading this who **isn't** a member of the UFO (United Fanzine Organization) and would like to join, all of the information you need can be found in the UFO Constitution which is located on the next two pages.

There were **two** UFO memberzines released since the previous issue of this newsletter: *The Damned Thing* #1 and *Tales of Fantasy* #62. You can find them (as well as some non-member zines) reviewed here in this issue.

The **"must publish a zine by"** dates:

BRANSTETTER: June 2014
BULLOCK: June 2014
CARRIER: June 2014
ENSIGN: May 2014
GAFFORD: September 2014
IMES: June 2014
JOHNSON: September 2014

Every member is fully paid up on their **annual dues** until 2014:

BRANSTETTER: paid until March 2014
BULLOCK: paid until May 2014
CARRIER: paid until July 2014
ENSIGN: paid until January 2014
GAFFORD: paid until July 2014
IMES: paid until February 2014
JOHNSON: paid until March 2014

"Must write" column for TF #231: **Jason Bullock** and **J. Kevin Carrier**.

I have standardized the deadlines for *T-Frags*, so that the deadline is on the 20th of every other month. The deadline for next issue (#231) is **Nov. 20th**.

If you'd like to stay in touch via the internet, note that there are two UFO pages on Facebook: the public group page (search for *United Fanzine Organization*), and the secret page limited only to current members (*UFO Members Only*). Also, check out the official UFO website (run by me) at http://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com

-- Rob Imes, UFO CHAIRMAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Front Cover (art by David Branstetter)
UFO Member List - Front inside cover
Chairman Chatter by Rob Imes - pg. 1
UFO Constitution - pg. 2
The Ensign Report #10
by Don Ensign - pg. 4
Strange Frequencies
by David Branstetter - pg. 8
SAM SEZ #8 by Sam Gafford - pg. 12
NOZ Notes by Rob Imes - pg. 15
Tales of the UFO
by Larry Johnson - pg. 16
UFO Checklist - Back inside cover
Back Cover (art by Darren Goodhart)

The UFO Constitution

Article One: Becoming a Member

To become a member of the **United Fanzine Organization** co-op, one must inform the Chairman of one's **application** and send a copy of his/her comic or zine to all members listed on the UFO roster. The membership will then **vote** on acceptance. (If the applicant's zine or comic is available to view online, the applicant may email the members a link to the pages for evaluation in lieu of mailing a printed copy; however, applicants should send a printed copy to members who are not regularly online or who specifically request the applicant to mail them a printed copy.) If a majority of the membership votes "yes" on the applicant's admission, he/she becomes a member. Applicants who receive a majority of "no" votes may apply again for membership at a later date.

Article Two: Membership Requirements

(a) All members are required to **publish a minimum of 20 pages** of new material (comic or text) per year. Web zines with equivalent material will count toward membership requirements. There is no maximum limit to the number of titles one may publish as memberzines.

(b) Each member is required to **mail a free copy of each memberzine**, as it is published, to all other co-op members. Publishers of webcomics should send hard copy versions of their online comics to the membership (as not all members may have internet access). Digital publishers must send an email to each member notifying them of their webzine. (Since webzines are free to all, those publishing print zines are not required to mail their zines to those publishing only on the web, but are encouraged to do so.)

(c) Each member is required to **submit a column** to at least every other issue of the UFO Newsletter (*Tetragrammaton Fragments*). The purpose of member columns is first to review the memberzines that one has received and second discuss club business (such as voting on amendments and applicants). *T-Frag* contributions are limited to a maximum of 10 pages each issue per member, unless the member receives the Chairman's consent to allow a higher page count for that particular issue of the newsletter.

(d) **Member dues are $20.00 annually**. These dues help to cover co-op promotion, and printing and mailing of the bi-monthly UFO Newsletter. If a member falls behind in his/her annual dues and/or publishing requirements, the member may ask the Chairman for a brief extension. If the member is dropped for failing to meet publishing requirements or newsletter participation, any remaining money in their account will be used toward their subscription to the newsletter.

(e) The UFO is limited to **25 members**. Others applying after the limit is reached will be placed on a waiting list and considered for membership in the order in which they applied. Waitlisters have the option of submitting a column to the UFO newsletter but they are not required to do so. It is at the discretion of each UFO member whether to send their memberzines to those on the waitlist since it is not required. UFO members are allowed to be members of other co-ops while they are in the UFO.

(f) **Honorary Members** are persons who have been voted into that position by a majority vote of the members. They may contribute to the newsletter, but have no voting power, are not required to pay the annual dues, and are not required to meet publication requirements. It is at the discretion of each member whether to send an Honorary Member a copy of their memberzine or not, as it is not required.

Article Three: Memberzine Requirements

(a) Each UFO publication must carry the **UFO symbol** on one of its four covers (exterior or interior front and back), preferably the front exterior cover. Webzines must display the symbol on their front page prominently.

(b) Each UFO memberzine (print or digital) is required to carry the **UFO Checklist**. Members may alter the wording in the Checklist as it appears in their own publications, as long as the changes are accurate and non-detrimental to those listed. (For minis or zines of 16 pages or less, an Abbreviated Checklist may be used, with simply the titles and prices of the books, and the names and addresses of the respective publishers.)

(c) The UFO does not **censor** its material, however responsibility and use of good taste and common sense in publishing are encouraged. The Chairman must publish member columns in the UFO newsletter unedited as long as they are within the page-count limit and not illegal or obscene in content.

Article Four: The UFO Chairman

(a) **Annual election**: A Chairman shall be elected in September, by a majority vote of the members, to a one-year term commencing in November. (Those running for the position of Chairman should start their campaigns no later than the July issue of the newsletter.)

(b) **Responsibilities**: An elected Chairman has the duties of editing and publishing the bi-monthly UFO newsletter, conducting the general co-op business, managing member dues accounts, or delegating these affairs. In consideration of the time and effort expended in the production of the UFO newsletter, a newly elected Chairman will be allowed two years -- dating from the publication of this first NL -- to publish an issue of his/her regular small press book, instead of the one zine a year requirement for the other members.

(c) **Emergency Chairman**: It is important that the UFO Chairman appoint an Emergency Chairman immediately upon assuming office. The Emergency Chairman shall assume the office of UFO Chairman if the elected Chairman resigns the position prior to the next election, or if the elected Chairman fails to publish the newsletter for more than 100 consecutive days.

(d) **Removal**: There is no limit to the amount of terms a Chairman may hold. The Chairman may be removed from office only by a majority vote. A Chairman who decides not to run for another term should make this known to the members prior to the publication of the July newsletter, so that other members may have time to announce their campaigns for the position.

The Ensign Report #10 (Sept. 2013) UFO edition

Printed as a part of *Tetragrammaton Fragments* #230. Comments and opinions by Don Ensign.
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Notes, Etc.

UFO Chairman Election: While this may be taken care of by the time this sees print I'd like to cast my vote for Rob Imes to continue his tenure as UFO Chairman. He has done an excellent job.

Gene Kehoe: This may also be ancient history by now but I definitely second Larry Johnson's nomination of Gene Kehoe for UFO membership.

Tales of Fantasy Book: I'd strongly recommend Larry Johnson's excellent Create Space *TOS* compilation. I have posted a review on the book's website.

The Mystery & Adventure Series Review: My apologies for the tardy thanks to Fred Woodworth for sending a copy of his small press publication. Thanks very much. While I'm not interested in that specific area of popular literary review and criticism I do appreciate that you are doing very noteworthy work in that field.

Errors: I strive to made my T-Frags column as error-free as possible. One major one slipped through on the review of *TOS* #61. "It is an alleyway with a view of the BSI building on the left skyline and to the upper right on the alley wall is the poster of Dr. Morheus." This should read "It is an alleyway with a view of the BSI building on the right skyline and to the upper left on the alley wall is the poster of Dr. Morheus."

Valiant Efforts #5: As I write this *Valiant Efforts* #5 is still about two months from printing but I am working on it. The art work is finished and you should be receiving copies by early November.

Strawman #0 (David Branstetter, 2013): I'm still trying to get a fix on what Strawman is all about. Here are some preliminary thoughts which may change as time goes on. My first impression is that Strawman is a kind of Don Quixote. Strawman goes about trying to right wrongs and sometimes succeeds but more often than not fails. There is both comedy and tragedy in Don Quixote and Strawman. As I've poked around the internet I've come across the terms "Tragicomedy" and "Theater of the Absurd". Wikipedia describes Tragicomedy as, "…the term can variously describe either a tragic play which contains enough comic elements to lighten the overall mood or, often, a serious play with a happy ending." Wikipedia also states the Theatre of the Absurd thus, …"the term is applied to a wide range of plays, some characteristics coincide in many of the plays: broad comedy, often similar to Vaudeville, mixed with horrific or tragic images; characters caught in hopeless situations forced to do repetitive or meaningless actions; dialogue full of clichés, wordplay, and nonsense; plots that are cyclical or absurdly expansive; either a parody or dismissal of realism and the concept of the "well-made play".

Perhaps I'm putting to much into David's creation but it seems that Strawman draws on many of these elements. There are comedy elements for sure in Strawman but the over all feel tends to be somewhat dark and tragic.

Overall I like David's artwork very well. The looseness of form and background,

the brushwork, the freedom to experiment, the texturing and hatching, the grey tones and the spotting of blacks are excellent. While sometimes the anatomy might be a bit off who cares as this is cartooning that fits the tragicomedy and theater of the absurd content of the strip very well.
The story I liked the most in this book was "The Last Laugh" that brought home some of the silliness that happens when one goes with friends to watch a movie. Don't you just hate it when a friend will say "What's going to happen next?" and really wants an answer. "Hey, just keep watching and we'll find out." Enjoyed the ending where both the Heckler (great knockoff of the Joker) and Strawman get kicked out and end up commiserating on the street curb. Also enjoyed the satire of of an over-the-top angst attack of being a "Real Man" in the "Moment of Truth" end piece. This apparently caused our hero to permanently transform in old haystack head. Also liked "The Black Whole" where David related how these stories came about.

Hero Central Jr. #2 (Jason Bullock, 2013) This is one of the best publications I've seen from Hero Central Studio. First, the coloring is top notch. On page 2 (panel 2) our hero's smashing feet first into Cyclone Ranger with a burst of energy. Great effect. Second, the over all layout and shape of the panels. This especially during the lead fight scene does a great job conveying the action. Probably the main thing to work on is the ID of the characters. Yes I realize that you've sent out a special pub covering this but the names of the characters should be repeated in the course of the story such as the bad guy Cyclone Ranger (who drops out of the action after page 3--I was waiting for him to reappear). A section of mug shots identifying the characters each issue would help. Overall very nice issue as I can get into the younger characters a bit more than the main group.

Ditkomania #91 (Rob Imes, 2013) I very much liked this issue of *Ditkomania*. Back in the late 1980s I purchased most of the *Speedball* run. I was intrigued with the idea that Steve Ditko was trying to recapture the original flavor (and popularity) of the early 1960s Spider-Man that he had so much to do with creating. I enjoyed the *Speedball* issues that I read though but I can't say that it was a big favorite at the time. It had similarities to the Peter Parker saga but was different enough to be entertaining. I still having them in my collection so I dug some of them out and perused them. Seems as if there is not only glimpses of the early *Spider-Man* but also *Hawk & Dove* with the arguments between Robbie's parents about the merits of science vs. art. Perhaps the more inflammatory topic of science vs. religion was quietly side stepped for something less controversial.
Both Rob's "Who Was That Masked Avenger" and Richard Caldwell's "The Subjective Character of Speedball" were very well researched and written. I appreciate Rob's notes on the art comparing and contrasting what Ditko did in 1988 to his early work in circa 1963. Perhaps the major stylistic different is there are many more semi-closeup face (conversational) shots in the Speedball where medium action shot ruled in Ditko's early web slinger stories. Also appreciate being up-dated on what happened to Speedball after his title was cancelled. We can only surmise that the

sales weren't good enough to warrant continuation of the series. Perhaps the tastes of the readership were different enough in the late 1980s that the approach Ditko took on *Speedball* just didn't gell. I thought Caldwell's brief discussion of changing reader expectations was also helpful.
Rob's article on "Ditko's Bouncing Heroes" delved into very obscure characters and was interesting to see how the artist had used a similar motif with other characters. Perhaps because these characters were published in fan pubs or low circulation comics most of them just didn't have the potential for lasting popularity.
I enjoyed the fan spot art, especially Matthew Clark's excellent Speedball piece that graced Caldwell's article, and it was great to see the color front and back covers. My only suggestion is to consider going to a two column format for some of the feature articles as it would increase readability. Excellent zine.

Western Tales #1 (Jim Main-2013) One of the more memorable scenes from the oft-criticized Green Lantern movie (2011) was the one where Carol Ferris meets Green Lantern (in costume) for the first time. She blurs out "Hal!!!" She wasn't for a second fooled by Green Lantern's domino mask. Probably the most unreal thing about the Sadie Big Breasts (er 6-Shot) tale was that her husband didn't immediately recognize her. No husband is going to miss his wife especially if she sports a figure like Sadie's. As a reader I didn't buy it for a millisecond. Both Rock Baker and Jeff Austin are very talented artists. I'd like to see them move on from the cheesecake/ T&A material to something more serious and deserving of their abilities.
Keel and Lorenz's "Cain Hawkins" story is another matter. Keel tosses in a host of western clichés and comes out with a fair, not great, but fair comic book oater. How many times have we seen a lone wolf gunfighter defend a town against the bad guys only to be cast off by the ungrateful townsfolk. I do like Keel's story context with references to real western bandits like Curly Bill Brocious. Lorenz's art has some good things going for it. One he does establishment shots, he keeps his camera moving with a variety of different camera angles. He uses spotting of blacks well and includes grey tones. However there is an awkwardness about his figure drawing that needs work. I'd suggest (if he already hasn't done so) selecting a well known western comic book artist(s) and concentrate learn how to make his figures less stiff and clumsy looking. Joe Maneely, the 1950s Atlas artist, might be a good place to start. Maneely's style is close to Lorenz's. Maneely did some work also for Charlton that is preserved on the Digital Comics Museum. [If Tony Lorenz is reading this and you are very comfortable with your work just ignore what I've written. My criticisms are offered with respect and in the spirit of constructive input. You've obviously done a lot of drawing I just hope you can continue to improve your work as I'm sure we all do including myself]. Kudos to Jim Main for producing a Western comic. Hopefully we'll see future issues.

Beforia Small Press Comics That Time Forgot (Dan Burke, 2013) Since this application pub is such a massive effort that I'm planning on doing three segments. The first this issue will be Dan's more recent comic strip work, then the Kirby analysis of Justice, Inc, etc and

finally Dan's older humor work. First off is great cover art of Marilyn Monroe-great figure drawing and background. As mentioned last issue I tend to glance through pubs I get before actually reading them. Looking at this issue I noted Dan's trademark sensuously dressed (or undressed) well-endowed women. Yep this is Dan Burke. Dan starts off with a Lew Brown multi-chapter time travel epic. It is obvious Dan has taken a great deal of time and effort to produce the artwork in this tale. Since Lew Brown is Larry Johnson's character it is reasonable to compare Larry's and Dan's versions. Dan's overall figure drawing and backgrounds are certainly more realistic (in rendering and draftsmanship) than Larry's version. Dan is very careful to add considerable detail to heighten the impact of the visuals. The major difference between Dan's and Larry's versions is continuity in story telling. While Larry's work drawings are simpler they are also more connected in terms of panel-to-panel, page-to-page story-telling. Burke's individual drawings are so good that I as a reader tend to become so engaged in examining the massive amount of detail in his panels that I tend to forget about the story. Johnson's panels in comparison are pared down to the essentials and there is a visual flow from panel to panel that is not as strong in Dan's "prettier" version. Johnson's comic art is more "of a piece" in the sense there is no ambiguity (what's actually happening) in his stories. I wonder which version Alex Toth and CC Beck would have preferred.

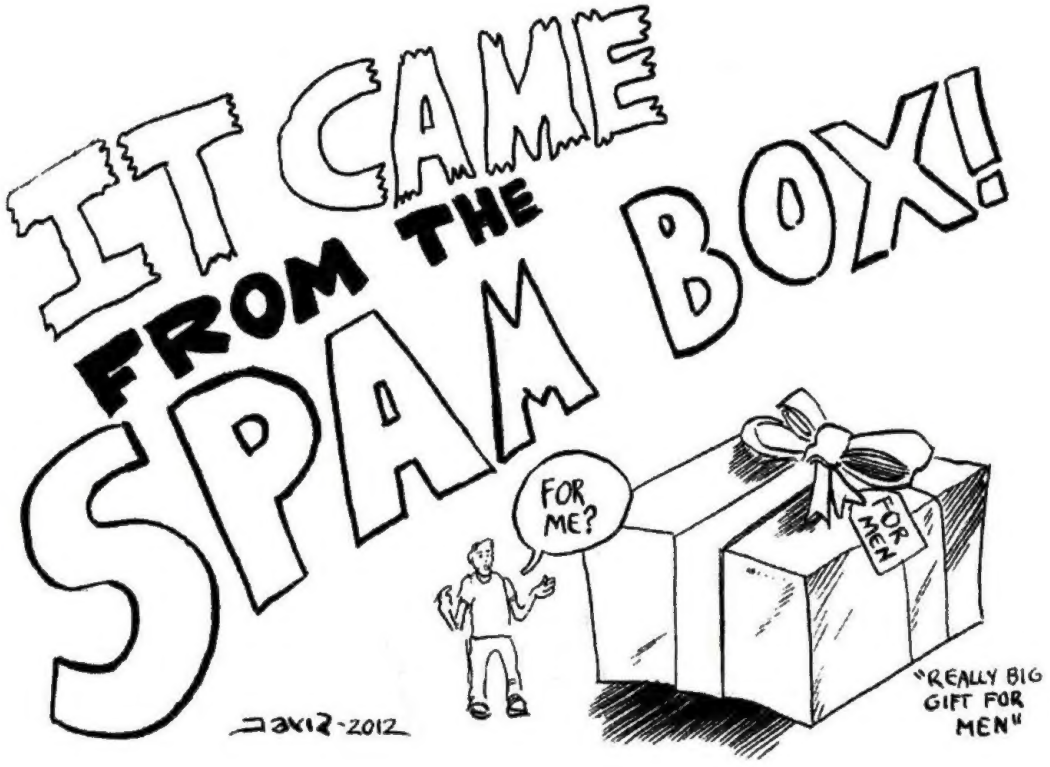
Some things I really like: Some of Dan's backgrounds are great (note page 7, panel 3, page 10, panel 5 and especially page 20, panel 3). Also liked Dan's use of brushwork (page 20, panel 1). ***Next Time.***

Bio-Speak 10

To round out my 1950s comics autobio here are two items. My brothers were cub scouts and boy scouts. Scouting never appealed to me--I didn't like the regimentation-perhaps the artist personality was emerging even at an early age. However my brothers subscribed to Boy's Life magazine which-guess what-had a comic section. This comic section had scout-related comic strips and also a Bible comics strip. Scouting was a lot different 60 years ago. Also I remember my brothers getting a 1953 copy of *Three Dimension Comics* with blue and red 3-D glasses. Mighty Mouse's artwork was just amazing in 3-D. Unfortunately this comic did not survive. I found out many years later comics legend Joe Kubert was partly responsible for this gem.

STRANGE FREQUENCIES

Opinions and Editorial
by David Branstetter



The Spam Box

I've been collecting email titles for a while that I thought were particuarly funny. These emails could be taken out of context from the meaning intended by the sender and thus had unintented humor. Occasionally I like to do something unrelated from Straw Man to expanded my creativity. The exercise of illustrating these unrelated emails has been a blast and I'll probably continue this series as time goes by.

Send you Questions
or Comments to:
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4212 Frisse Ave.
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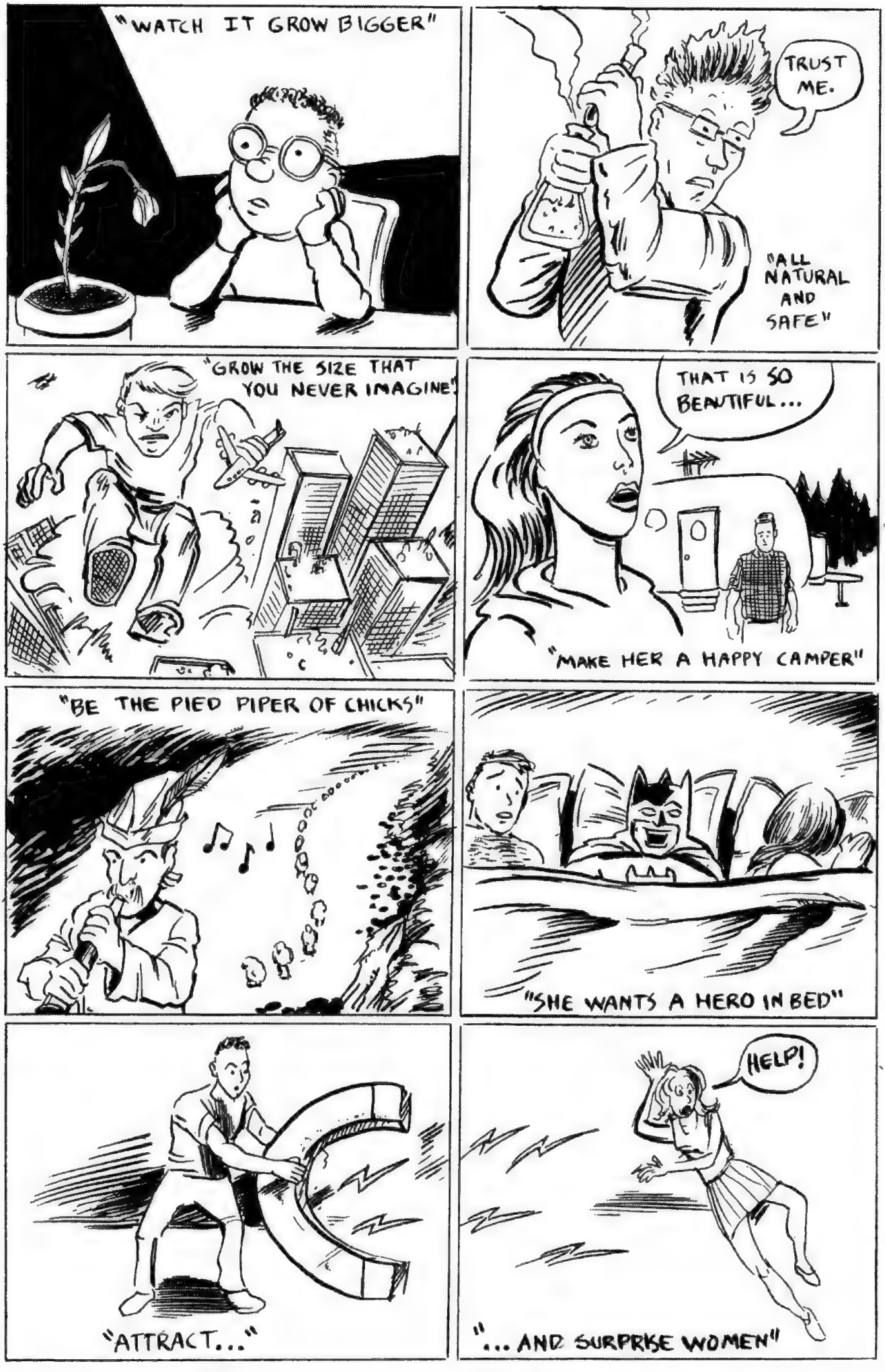
strawmancomics@gmail.com


"WATCH IT GROW BIGGER"
TRUST ME.
"ALL NATURAL AND SAFE"
"GROW THE SIZE THAT YOU NEVER IMAGINE"
THAT IS SO BEAUTIFUL...
"MAKE HER A HAPPY CAMPER"
"BE THE PIED PIPER OF CHICKS"
"SHE WANTS A HERO IN BED"
"ATTRACT..."
HELP!
"... AND SURPRISE WOMEN"

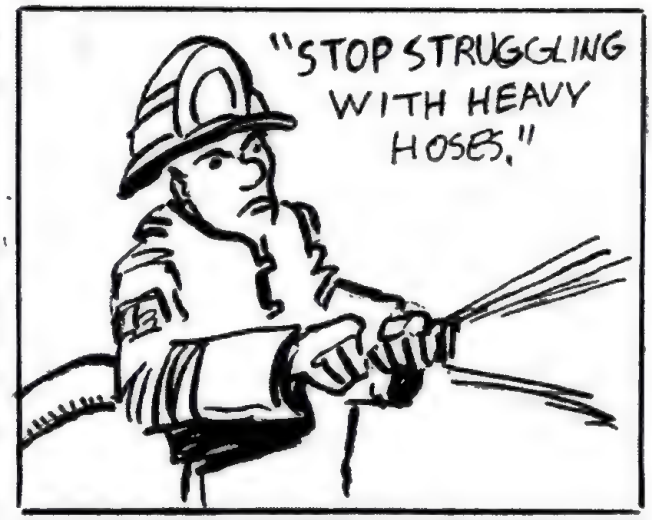
"IMPROVE YOUR ACTING IN BED THIS NIGHT"

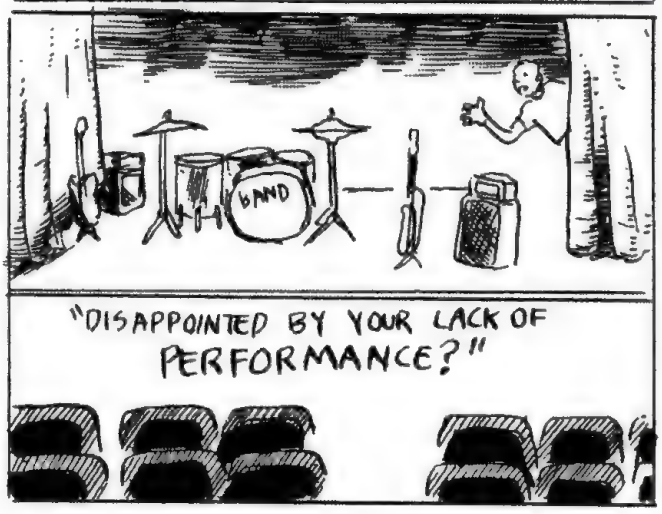
"GET THE MANHOOD YOU'VE ALWAYS DESIRED"

"YOU HAVE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF, THIS IS REALLY SERIOUS."

"CREDIT CARDS FOR EVERY OCCASSION..."
DEAR SALLY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.

"BURN UP TO A POUND A DAY WITH THIS SIMPLE SECRET."


"STOP STRUGGLING WITH HEAVY HOSES."


BAND
"DISAPPOINTED BY YOUR LACK OF PERFORMANCE?"

JOIN US
"COBRA ISN'T YOUR ONLY OPTION"

SUGAR DADDY & SUGAR BABY DATING
SUGAR BABIES
SUGAR DADDY
"LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION"
"RELEASE YOUR SOUL WITH OPRAH"
"BEST DISH OFFER EVER!!!"
EVERYONE NEEDS A COMPANION. FIND YOURS HERE
POLICE BOX
"IF YOU LOOK SILLY IN BED"
"HAVE YOU OR A LOVED ONE HAD ROBOTIC SURGERY?"
SORRY, GUYS NOT FOR YOU.

SAM SEZ #8

A column for the United Fanzine Organization newsletter,
Tetragrammaton Fragments from Sam Gafford
624 Metacom Ave., Apt. #103, Warren, RI 02885.
Email: *lordshazam@yahoo.com* Website: *ultharpress.com*
August 2013

And now it`s time for Fall.

Out of all the seasons, I prefer Fall. I enjoy cooler temperatures the most so long as they`re not TOO cool. And, during the Fall, New England is a great place to be. I simply couldn`t imagine living anywhere else this time of year.

And, once again, it`s time for another issue of TF. They seem to be coming quicker these days or else my sense of time is just eroding at a faster pace. But, as Emperor Franz Joseph said in *Amadeus*: "There it is."

We have two matters before us as a group that need to be resolved. One is virtually a no-brainer. The other… well, we`ll get to that presently.

The "One" is Rob Imes running for chairman for the coming year. He is running uncontested but, even if he were challenged, I`d still vote for him. Since becoming chairman, Rob has proven himself to be an invaluable asset to the UFO. He is tireless in his attempts to spread the word about the group, maintains a regularly published newsletter (in addition to his own zine, DITKOMANIA), and keeps a ship that has floundered in the previous past afloat and moving forward. Rob is a constant inspiration to all of us and, to me personally, one of the main reasons I am still here.

The second issue is a bit more difficult and that is the recent application by Dan Burke for re-admission to the group. I want to state for the record that I have nothing against Dan and I enjoy his publications. I think that he is very talented and will be someone to watch in small press in the future.

That said I have to respectfully vote "No".

This is not an easy decision nor one that I came to capriciously. It is based on much thought and also memories. When Dan was a UFO member previously, he had a lot of ideas and suggestions for the group. Not all of them were well received. (I admit I was one who did not agree with some of these ideas.) Now, that would have been fine. We are a group of individuals and not

everyone thinks the same. There should be open discussion and debate in the group.

The problem arose when Dan could not understand why anyone would disagree with him and started making pointed remarks. There was also a short time when Dan was going to run for Chairman with his suggestions as his platform. I, and several others, did not agree with Dan and did not like his 'vision' for the UFO. After this, Dan quit abruptly.

I would like to think that Dan has changed and grown since that time. I believe in second chances. But I remember the discord he brought and I don't want to experience that again. We nearly lost several members because of that (including myself) and my personal feeling is that, had Dan become Chairman, the group would not be here now.

"There it is."

Hopefully, everyone has received their copies of my latest publication: **THE DAMNED THING**. I have heard on FB that a few haven't arrived and I'll send out replacement copies. This is not too surprising as I'm having a great deal of problems with the Post Office (including being overcharged for postage for DT and not realizing it myself) but it is annoying. Hopefully this will not happen again.

I'd been thinking of reviving DT for awhile and Rob provided the inspiration and encouragement I needed to do so. DT ran for about 6 issues back in the 90s and, I think, was a spiffy little mag. When my fortunes changed, I gave up small press publishing and DT was one of the casualties. Now, hopefully, I can keep it going for awhile.

THE DAMNED THING is hard to describe as it's pretty much full of whatever interests me at the time but with a dark or horror bent. This time around, I was able to find new voices to contribute and I think that they lend a new tone to the zine. I do not deny that I am "an old fart" but instead revel in this status. However, it is best to have some type of variety in a zine. But DT also came about because I've become more and more disenchanted with comics lately. It's not just the lack of quality material that is out there but also the entire comic industry that is making me pause. Recent events at DC comics have shown most transparently how little respect they have for fans (especially old ones like myself) and the only things left reading are coming from the independent or small press. But I could have sat down and drawn a story or two... except I just didn't have the ambition to do that any more.

This is not something new. I've gone through this before where my interest in comics wanes. Usually it takes something really amazing to rekindle it and I don't see anything like that on the horizon. I tend to think of my interests as a giant roulette wheel and, every once in a while, a different interest comes up a winner. Hence, DAMNED THING..

Now that you've seen the zine, I welcome contributions from any and all.

REVIEWS

Not much to review this time out other than DT and a new issue of Larry Johnson's TALES OF FANTASY. That alone is reason to celebrate.

TALES OF FANTASY #62-Larry Johnson

It does my heart good to see this all text issue of TALES OF FANTASY. Not that I don't love Larry's comic work but this really shows me that the UFO can, and should, contain more than just comic book zines.

This issue is a joy from cover to cover.

As a longtime Lovecraftian, it was great to read Mike Tuz's story, "The Passage in the Darkness". Starring Larry's longtime character, Lew Brown, Tuz brings forth an enjoyably chilly tale that harkens back to old Boston. It's a fine riff on some Lovecraft stories and a lot of fine. I have to wonder, though, will this story have some impact on Lew's life now? He states that he can never look at the Back Bay again so will this come up again?

The second story, "Never Forget" by Larry Johnson features another of his characters, Bart Rover, who is sent to another planet to reclaim a faulty robot. As always, Rover is transferred into the body of a native but this time it's a kind that seems to have problems remembering just what it's supposed to be doing! Fun story written in an easy style that flies by far too quickly.

The last story is a bit of a change and features Larry's Madame Boogala in a tale of mid 19th century Europe featuring a creature whose identity should not be hard to determine. "The Circus of King Carlos" by Perry Lake (with Larry) is a moody little story that really does not paint Madame Boogala very well. She comes across as quite angry and maybe even a little bit evil here and I found this aspect of her character to be a little disturbing. The introduction of ghouls reminded me again of Lovecraft and the story left me wanting more. I hope that there will be a sequel sometime soon!

Whoops! Outta room! Until next time!

NOZ NOTES

by Rob Imes

My apologies for the lateness of this issue of *T-Frags*. I had planned for it to come out in late September (since the deadline for it was Sept. 20th), but wasn't able to finish my column until now. (I'm printing this issue up on Oct. 8th.)

REVIEWS:

THE DAMNED THING #1

It's great to see another fanzine (like my own *Ditkomania*) in the UFO. One of the things that I love about fanzines is that they encourage others to contribute to them (art, articles, etc.) and I was pleased to see the variety of voices in this issue. The text is large, so this zine is a fast read, but the large text does make the act of reading it seem more appealing. It's nicely laid out. If I had to point out any flaws, I'd note that the dark red cardstock paper somewhat obscures the words and images on the covers. A white cover would have made reading the cover art easier. Perhaps my favorite part of the whole issue was Sam's own article, about the film "The Black Cat." Some text is missing from the end of the article, though. Perhaps the missing text can be printed in the next issue. Looking forward to more!

TALES OF FANTASY #62

I'm a fan of prose fiction digests, so this all-prose issue of TOF was right up my alley. The issue starts off with a Lew Brown story titled "The Passage in the Darkness" by Mike Tuz. Aside from the fact that it takes place in Boston and Lew is identified as a reporter, that is the only connection between TOF's Lew Brown and the one in this story, as far as I can see. It's a very simple old-fashioned horror story in the style of H. P. Lovecraft, although lacking the poetical rhythm of Lovecraft's writing or his use of large words. (Only once during this tale did I come across a word with which I was unfamiliar, a mention of the ship's "barque.") The story is well-done and enjoyable, and has the style of a classic. If I had stumbled upon it in an old 1950s issue of *Other Worlds*, I would have been greatly pleased with my discovery. However, because this is 2013, it does come across also a bit like HPL fan-fiction, and indulging too much in the cliched trappings of the genre: the hesitant narrator at the beginning, the visit to a fearful friend who has a fantastic tale to relate, a horrible secret that mankind has kept hidden for its own safety, a trip into the clammy depths, and the zinger of a last line that reveals a character's fate. I began to wonder if it simply felt like a "classic" because it hits a lot of the familiar cliches.

Contrast this with "The Circus of King Carlos" by Perry Lake (with Larry Johnson), a story that is harder to predict where it is going, that produces some surprises, and seems more character-driven than plot-driven. While it lacks the appealing "classic" simplicity of Tuz's tale, it has a natural, believeable quality (despite the fantasy content) that made me want to spend more time in that world. Both stories have their merits, but I think Lake's would have a better chance of being published in a magazine like *F&SF* today because it is less predictable. Larry Johnson's "Never Forget" plays with the idea of cliche (elephants never forget) but is not confined by it, taking the reader on an imaginative trip into an alien lifeform where even communication can be difficult to achieve. Imagination is probably the key word in the Bart Rover stories, and the brevity of this short-short makes it particularly satisfying: we get in and get out before things get boring (i.e., plot-driven). Anyway, a stellar issue of TOF!!

Dan Burke's application zine **BEFORIA** is a thick trade-paperback, with comicbook reviews and well-drawn humor strips. Even though it looks professional on the surface (via Createspace's print-on-demand service), that can't hide poor writing. An example from Dan's review of several Jack Kirby comics: *"Justice Inc. was a crappy book. It should have been better. Certainly they had a lot of talented people working on it. That being said..could you imagine 'wasting' Jacks* [sic] *talents on a book like this? Or Kobra? My skin crawls!"* There are also three pages reprinting an "A Failure to Communicate" article by Mike Gartland from *Jack Kirby Collector* #24 (also posted on their website). It would be nice to know if Dan obtained permission from Gartland to use that copyrighted article in his book. So, while the production methods used in this book are appealing, questions remain for me about its use of another's work.

TALES OF THE UFO

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BEFORIA: I think in the history of the UFO I have never seen such a large size publication submitted as "for your consideration" for membership. (Well, ages ago Jim Main did a huge issue of Spectrum which I contributed a third of the material to but that's a different story.) So the question is "where to begin" in critiquing Dan Burke's book.

The answer would be at the beginning. That's a great looking cover and immediately you have the impression that the printing and production is of a professional quality. Dan has used Create Space for this print-on-demand book (the same company I used for my Best of Tales of Fantasy edition).

We are first presented with Dan's take on my character Lew Brown and his concept of the City of Brookston. I am certainly complimented by his ambition here. I have been curious about the results of this story of which previously I have only seen bits of. Let me mention first what I liked about it. But before that, there's an introductory page. Madame Boogala's name is misspelled. It's the "Brookston Scientific Institute" not "Science." These typos could be fixed for future editions.

I had to ask myself when reading this story was "whose story is this?" It's often a question I have for myself when writing my own tales. Ostensibly it is Lew Brown, but it seems to me the most prominent character is Joe Carbone. And I must admit that Dan did a real good take on Joe. His sense of Joe as a no nonsense, take action sort of guy is very clear and true to my feeling about this engineer. The characterization is very good here.

So we find out that Lew Brown has been changed into a woman via a "gen-ray" one of Joe's experimental devices. Dan deals with, what seems to me, the "cosmetic" differences between men and women here – for example, a fashion sense and the proverbial "taking so long to get dressed" issue. I wondered how come this female Lew – "Lucy" has long hair all of a sudden, when the male version had short hair; I've known plenty of women with shorter hair than men. And furthermore, I remember a phone conversation with Dan discussing a few visual issues, like the fact that Lew always has a little curl on his forehead, at his widow's peak (in reference to a look for the female version) and I knew he took a note of it. So I figured he would use that particular "visual signature" to denote the female Lew. However in the story this little touch was not dealt with, and when "Lucy" met up with the other gal – Glenda – I had trouble telling them apart because they looked alike, both with similar long hair styles. And in fact, the female TV reporters also have this same long hair. It would have been good to have made the women look significantly different from each other.

Throughout this tale I was waiting for some kind of explanation as to the use of this "gen-ray" but it never came. It may be that I was feeling the way I would set up a story, this is a question I would like an answer to, or at least a partial answer. It is often the case that BSI receives government and military contracts for devices for spy missions and national security that go awry. Perhaps the "gen-ray" could fit into one of these uses. Was there some kind of mistake Lew made when he used this ray? I was hoping for a flashback. I think if we had some kind of at least hint of an explanation this would have been a stronger story.

I like the "Brookston Motel" because it helps to broaden the concept of what this city is about. And the missing "Subject 72" a female Creature of the Black Lagoon was good too. This fits in well with the way in which BSI is run. It's not necessarily an evil place, just negligent, so it's in the realm of possibility that one of their experiments would "get out" as they have in my stories.

As for Dan's conception of the BSI, it's certainly more blatantly laid out than my own depiction of this institution. You'll note in my stories that there's always one establishing shot of the complex. Here, Dan has elaborated on that – even with a helicopter port. I'm fine with

this. You'll note in my stories, in the general cityscape of Brookston the BSI sign shows up now and then. Is it always the same sign? I used to work in a clerical position at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and this complex took up several acres in the southeastern part of Cambridge. I think it is quite feasible that BSI could have a similar arrangement in the city of Brookston. This idea has been in the back of my head when putting in all these signs in my background.

When I was mentioning what is known as a "visual signature" like Lew Brown's hair, there's also a certain look about the interior of the BSI that is consistent in all of my stories. That is the ceiling ventilation system composed of fat piping seen in hallways and labs, and it has been a "signature" in each story I have done about the BSI. Well, it may be what readers notice. This is quite evident to me but maybe not to everyone else. I found myself wishing I could see this piping in the scene at the end of Chapter 5 in which Dr. Ratticus is walking down the hallway. This bit of familiarity, at least to me would make BSI more relatable (maybe not to anyone else I guess). And also I was thinking that Dan, during the production of this story has been inking a BSI story I did the pencils on – "Robot" – (and has been doing a great job by the way) where this ceiling piping is apparent.

In introducing new elements Dan has created a "field agent" and that's worth pondering as well. I like this idea. Initially I felt BSI was only a research and development organization populated by engineers and scientists. This is a good concept he has introduced for me to consider for future stories.

The concept of opening up a door to other worlds ties into both a Lovecraftian tone and a science fiction element. This is good, and offers a hint of about the background of the strange goings on in Brookston.

That's a great panel at the top of the last page of Chapter 5 too, describing all the destruction. I might point out, that again a "visual signature" of my stories is that the Brookston Police Department building in my stories is a specific "visual signature" but here I guess 12 years in the future maybe they've moved or updated.

Since when does Joe Carbone have a townhouse? He still is Lew Brown's upstairs neighbor in a three-decker apartment house, living in the same place as depicted in the story "Time Again" that Dan and I collaborated on over 20 years ago.

I am on the one hand, flattered, by Dan's take on Brookston and the BSI and at the same time don't fully relate to all the goings on in his version of this town as what I feel Brookston represents. But that's a personal view and I agree with Mike Tuz's assessment in the back of the book that I would handle the story differently. I must say that Mike has a good feel for Brookston stories, and is open to my editorial suggestions.

Going back to my statement about the "visual signature" related to that, there are familiar characters in my series also. I saw the very first page on Facebook, and I mentioned to Dan that if that is supposed to be Detective Kolowski, my version has a more prominent nose. Dan replied that this was "Detective Gregg." Hmm! So, this detective wears a Fedora, a trench coat and smokes a cigarette, just like Kolowski (and his manner is similar too). He could be his clone, and every time he showed up I was initially confused, having to tell myself that "no, this is not Kolowski." The problem I have here is that Dan made him way too close to my character, so I thought of him as a "counterfeit" Kolowski. I've actually talked with real detectives, and believe me; they dress like the ones you'd find on TV's Law and Order: SVU. I know I was doing a stereotype character here. If only Dan had made this guy significantly different in appearance I would have accepted him better.

Now, in that same opening panel, we have a TV reporter – obviously NOT Rhonda Cry from Channel 8 News. I've done a few BSI stories where this nosy reporter (ala Lois Lane) shows up to do TV coverage and I know Dan is familiar with her. How come he didn't use her in this story?

I mention these two characters because the only one in the whole story I relate to as re-

sembling a resident of Brookston is Joe Carbone (OK, Dr. Ratticus shows up too, and his brief appearance is OK). I think what may have made this story more relatable (at least to my prejudiced eye) is if the original Detective and TV reporter were included. This is the familiarity that readers note in my stories and I've somehow stumbled upon this over the years, no matter who the main characters are, these people in the background are consistent and give you the feeling that Brookston is a real place (at least that's what my readers tell me).

I found Dan's write-up of how he approached writing and producing this story fascinating. When he mentioned that he writes all this dialogue and "boils it down" editing away sometimes 90% of the words it got me to thinking of my own process. These days I pretty much take the opposite approach, trying to get my characters to speak in a spare, direct "finished" way at my initial writing, and instead of boiling it down I often find myself going back and adding more dialogue (a tricky prospect finding the right place) and making my characters' interactions stronger when needed, at the same time attempting to make them sound natural.

I will say that the art on this story is great. Dan has achieved a fine style. His people are convincing and I like the detailed cityscapes and backgrounds a lot. That being said, comparing this work to his old "cartoon-y" style in the 20+ year old reprints in this book I think as accomplished as this art is, there's something more appealing about the old style. It may be that he is concerned with the technical so much that he's losing the spontaneity that made these old works so much fun. It may be mastering the "computer tablet" style of drawing that he has told me about.

I look at the reprint of "Time Enough" where Dan inked my pencils and to my eye I am drawing the same. My initial copy of Beforia was missing Page 2 of this story, and I sent Dan a "tiff" of it, so he sent the corrected copy to me. This story will not make sense without page 2 for any members who saw that version.

This book could have easily been chopped up into three different titles, because all of a sudden we have a whole Jack Kirby section worth of a classic fanzine. I admire Dan's enthusiasm for this comics artist. I must be critical here though. I've been reading "fannish" writing in fanzines for over 40 years and I don't expect it to be polished, but Dan's writing here could have used a heavy editorial hand. Not only is it choppy, but there are so many non-sentences you have to sort of take it like someone were conversing casually with you to get through it. This is not to say this isn't a worthy subject to talk about – Kirby's end of his tenure at DC and his hack work at the time – but I think it could have been presented in a much more interesting way.

Dan sent three issues of the original Justice, Inc. comic book from the 1970s, quite generous of him. These, he said, where to help appreciate his criticism of the series. I found myself going page by page, panel by panel against his observations. This is one way of doing this, and it made me think of how I approach such story telling techniques with my students in my comic book class. Dan teaches a similar class and I'm sure he does the same thing too. But I know that my students get bored quickly if I go on about too many pages so I just give them the essence and I think that Dan's whole assessment of the series might have been more successful it he had pulled back some as well. It's not as though this is not a scholarly approach but – whoa – I'm overloaded! It might have been a good idea to just do some reproductions of the pages in question and place them among the article where these observations were written. He's done some of that in the insert pages and that is welcome.

I found myself disagreeing with his assessment of the final issue (#4) of Justice, Inc. He says the last page is drawn clearly. This, to my eye, is Jack Kirby phoning it in. The planes are drawn clearly, but we have to rely on the captions to figure out what is going on. This is a classic example, as I point out to my comic book students, of a violation of the show me don't tell me rule. I would have pulled back the camera to show the plane and the crippled dirigible in one shot in panel one right away to let

the reader see what is happening right away.

The reprints of the small press parodies and tweaking of the notables of about 20-25 years ago was a lot of fun! I remember all that, but of course I was there. Fooey and Lew Bruwn! Right on!

It seems, though, this book could have used a better sense of organization. We are presented with this title on the cover, "Beforia – Small Press Comics That Time Forgot." Well, I'd like to open up the book and see those comics right away. Instead we have the new Lew Brown story in the front, and then the Jack Kirby section and finally the cover material.

Maybe a table of contents would have helped.

Enthusiasm and a professional approach to telling stories – yes – but a strong editorial hand would present this material in a much more manageable package. Dan said he wanted criticism so I'm giving it, and remember all of this is just my own opinion based on my own experience in publishing and reading small press books for years and years. Take it for what it is worth.

DAN'S MEMBERSHIP BID: Boy, this was a hard decision. When I first learned of Dan's intentions to rejoin the UFO I thought the best I could do would be to ABSTAIN; and that's because of his history with this group and the ill feelings he had when he left. He wrote a scathing tirade against Rob Imes (on Facebook) in reaction to criticizing his book, and was annoyed because members resisted his ideas of getting the UFO newsletter printed professionally and got all pissy! Now, over a year later, he says he wants criticism. Hmmm.

I truly believe that Dan is now addressing his bulldog ways, and at the risk of passing judgment because I ain't perfect by any means, I feel that we should give him a chance. It may be a case of the tail wagging the dog (the bulldog!). The UFO does not have a probationary period to see how one behaves. And The UFO also does not have a mechanism to vote out a problematic member. That is a good thing, I think, because it denotes punishment. What usually happens is that you get someone at odds with everyone else who self destructs and leaves on his own accord. So that brings me to a very important point. We are all in this group on a VOLUNTARY basis. This is not the army, not an enrollment in school where you've paid a hefty tuition. There is no obligation to stay around. And this freedom is a good thing. People come and go, and yet the UFO survives as a critical supportive group of creators. So that means I am willing to give Dan a chance, and it was an iffy decision on my part, but I will vote YES because it's the right thing to do.

THE DAMNED THING #1: It's good to see another real FANZINE in the United Fanzine Organization, and this one has a great feel to it, with contributions from people who are really into their subject matter, the horror and fantasy field, and are able to express themselves in both an intimate and clearly written manner. Annie Riordan's "Feeding The Tree" article was in a sense a kind of short story in itself, in which she limns a transitional period in her own life; we get a glimpse of a reader/collector giving up most of her comforting collection for a new life, a prospect that would personally fill me with dread! Her description of the book by Caitlin Keirnan – "The Red Tree" – brought to mind another atmospheric book I read a while back, Piers Anthony's "The Shade of the Tree" and most interestingly, in a tangential way was the brief mention of a book by Shirley Jackson. A friend of mine recently told me that her stories remind her of the approach I use in my stories! So I'll have to look her up. I have a couple Clive Barker books too (short stories) and especially remember the story about the hands that revolt! My all-time favorite piece in this zine however is Sam Gafford's review of The Black Cat. For a long time I have extolled Bela Lugosi as my favorite actor and I think that's still true. This is one of his most subtle, powerful performances I think. There are a few scenes in this film where just his reactions to the situations convey so much emotion, for example when he listens to the tales of the horrors of this prison while riding in the taxi early on. Watch his face! And then when he sees the mummified remains of his dead wife for the

first time. "Why is she like this?" This film was ahead of its time I think. Science fiction, hardly! Supernatural, nope! And what makes this more brilliant was that this horror scenario was based on a real place and a monster of a man. And I agree with Sam's assessment of the "film noir" setting of The Black Cat. Gee, the last sentence got cut off! Whoops! Personally I have trouble reading through any illustration behind the text, like here the black cat and in the other article, the tree. But that's my personal view. I also liked the capsule reviews of the Lovecraft film adaptations and was reminded of some short productions I have seen on YouTube. This is a professional publication, and it's good to see it in the UFO.

KEVIN COOL #28: It's good to see Larry Blake continue publishing this fun title, and with such professional printing too. The lead story was entertaining; a school boy's fantasy, I think, of carrying out all this mischief! I loved seeing all the comics characters that went to this high school. I think my favorite part was at the end when Larry's alter ego scavenges all those pens and paper for his own use! Us artists waste not, want not. "The Pride Of Man" was a great piece, recollecting the homemade production of a film Larry and his buddies made years ago. I hope he's able to transfer this onto digital media and maybe get some help to put it up on YouTube – that is if he is a sharing mood. Back in the 70s I acted in such a production as a "Scarved Person." That meant I had a silk scarf draped across my face. Talk about "blind acting!" I realized with this new digest size that reducing down my text piece about Gorgo Comics came out ill-proportioned because it was originally laid out for an 8 ½ by 11 page. I must admit I couldn't remember if Larry had printed those Laff Book cartoons of mine, but here they are! He might have a better time of evoking that era than I do. The years, they tumble by! But it may be that these collaborations, as Larry says, between his grown up and his younger self come up with this surprisingly fresh perspective of a youthful time I can relate to, since we are of the same generation, and that's a good thing!

ODDS & ENDS: I made a mistake in the new Tales of Fantasy, #62, which you all have. Mike Tuz pointed out that in my indicia on the editorial page; I was incorrect in stating: All contents © 2013 Larry Johnson, since this issue contained prose works by him and Perry Lake. He's absolutely right, and I apologize and I hope he forgives me. It was an oversight on my part, I just wasn't thinking, and blindly picked up that little write-up from the previous issue as I have for the past 60 issues. He did point out that he and Perry were doing stories "based on my characters" Lew Brown and Madame Boogala, and I could state that these concepts are mine but the stories are copyrighted by him and Perry. In the future when I do an issue like this I will say, "All stories in this issue are copyrighted material of their respective authors."

This brings me to the point of copyrighting your material to begin with. Do you think that putting a little "c" with a circle drawn around it protects your work? Years ago, Luisa Felix told me, expressing concerns about my ownership of my character Zooy: "Do you think a fake copyright "c" will protect him? You must submit your work to the copyright office." So, around 1990 I applied for copyrights to Zooy, Madame Boogala and Lew Brown by paying a fee and submitting a page of drawings of each character in different poses (since they would be seen primarily in the visual medium of comics). This documentation would link the name to the image. And you can check on line and see that these characters are officially copyrighted, the material on file in Washington. I would ask UFO members – do your concepts have this kind of copyright protection? Glorianna, Straw Man, etc?

So, currently I am working on the next issue of Tales of Fantasy, celebrating the 50th anniversary of Zooy. Just scanned in the covers of all 72 issues for a special feature in this book! That's it for this time. Here's to harmony and challenge! I learn from constructive criticism and I hope you do too. That's the reason I am in the UFO. Keep on publishing, and thank you Rob Imes for keeping things going! Best wishes until next time!

The UFO CHECKLIST

The United Fanzine Organization (UFO) is a co-op of small-press comics publishers and creators dedicated to setting a higher standard of quality in independent and alternative press. The members mutually aid each other in the promotion and production of their own publications. Any small-press publisher interested in applying for membership in the UFO should contact the UFO Chairman: **Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195** or you can email him at ***robimes@yahoo.com*** The official UFO website: *http://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com*

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS!! #228: This is the UFO Newsletter, the central forum for UFO members, containing columns and artwork that can't be found anywhere else. 28 digest-size B&W pages for **$2.50** postpaid in the USA from **Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195** or you can email him at ***robimes@yahoo.com*** for more info.

DITKOMANIA #90: This issue of the fanzine devoted to comics creator Steve Ditko features a long article by former ACE Comics publisher **Ron Frantz** about working with Ditko in the late 1980s, and the abandoned plans to publish *Ooky & Zooky*, a comic by Superman co-creator **Jerry Siegel**. 44-page B&W digest for **$3.00** postpaid in the USA from **Rob Imes** (see address above).

FANTASY THEATER #23: A Lady Spectra and Lizard Man team-up by **Steven Myers** and **J. Kevin Carrier**, plus another adventure of the female barbarian Glorianna by **J. K. Carrier**. A 56-page B&W digest-size comic (with color covers) available in print for **$3.50** from ***www.indyplanet.com*** and also available digitally for **99¢** from ***www.indyplanet.com/digital***

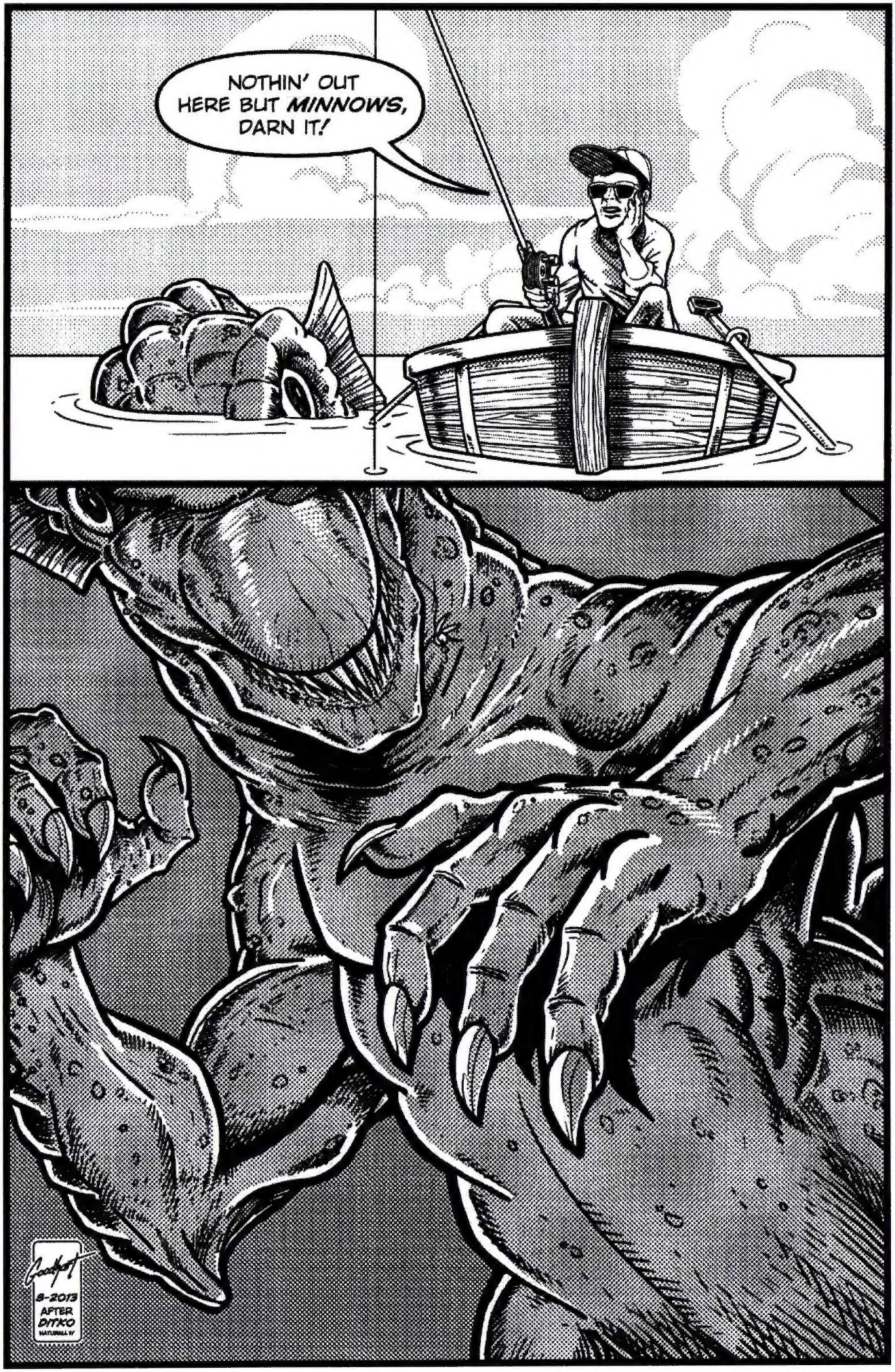
HERO CENTRAL UNIVERSE #8-9: A special double-sized issue featuring Faraday, Uberfraulein, and more! 48-page B&W digest comic with color cover for **$6.00** postpaid from **Jason Bullock, P. O. Box 2684, Loganville, GA 30052**. Email ***jasonb@girafnetwork.com*** for more info or visit HCU on the web at **http://www.girafnetwork.org**

HCU CONFIDENTIAL #3: Get more info about the HCU with this companion zine that provides background info & character profiles. 20-page B&W digest zine (with color cover) for only **$1.00** postpaid from **Jason Bullock, P. O. Box 2684, Loganville, GA 30052.**

STRAW MAN #0: A collection of miscellaneous Straw Man adventures with two never-before-seen stories. A fun done-in-one comic that is a great introduction to the hero who truly lives by the phrase "Sometimes Life Just Sucks." 32-page B&W full-size comic for **$4.00** postpaid from **David Branstetter, 4212 Frisse Ave., Evansville, IN 47714.** Email ***strawmancomics@gmail.com*** or visit ***www.strawmancomics.com***

TALES OF FANTASY #61: More about the new costumed hero **"The Hand"** with chapters 3 and 4, plus an installment of *Dream Diary* and a lengthy, interesting letters column. 52-page B&W digest-size comic book with color covers for **$3.00** postpaid in the USA from **Larry Johnson, 31 Greenbrook Rd., Hyde Park, MA 02136**. Email ***LewBrown75@yahoo.com*** or visit **www.LarryJohnsonartist.com**

VALIANT EFFORTS Vol. 3 #4: StreetFury continues, plus two backup tales starring The Golden Protector! Full-size 28-page B&W comic with a color cover for **$3.00** postpaid from **Don Ensign, 250-A S. Paseo Cerro, Green Valley, AZ 85614**. Email him at ***donensign@mail.com*** for info.


NOTHIN' OUT HERE BUT MINNOWS, DARN IT!
8-2013
AFTER DITKO